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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CASC](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING - SYRIA

1. This Travel Warning warns U.S. citizens of ongoing safety and security concerns in Syria. American citizens are urged to consider carefully the risks of travel to Syria and to take adequate precautions to ensure their safety. This supersedes the Travel Warning for Syria issued on April 15, 2008.

2. On multiple occasions throughout January 2009, thousands of Syrians protested in mostly government-orchestrated rallies against Israeli military actions in the Gaza Strip. While these events were largely peaceful, in one instance a few hundred protestors challenged police lines outside the Egyptian Embassy in downtown Damascus and were dispersed by means of non-lethal force. At least seven smaller-scale and non-violent demonstrations have occurred in central Damascus and other urban centers.

3. On October 30, 2008, the Syrian Government allowed a large-scale demonstration in central Damascus to take place with the aim of protesting an alleged U.S. military action at the Syrian/Iraqi border that had occurred earlier that week. Security concerns related to the demonstration prompted a temporary closure of the U.S. Embassy for one day. In response to the same alleged incident, the Syrian Government ordered the immediate closure of the Damascus Community School, the American Language Center, and the American Cultural Center on November 4, 2008. They remain closed until further notice.

4. On October 9, 2008, Syrian authorities raided Yarmouk refugee camp on the outskirts of Damascus and killed three terrorist suspects. On September 27, 2008, a car bomb exploded in a southern suburb of Damascus in proximity to a Syrian intelligence installation, killing and wounding numerous civilians. On August 3, 2008, a Syrian general was assassinated near Tartous. On February 12, 2008, an explosion in the residential Kafer Soseh neighborhood of Damascus killed a senior Hizbollah operative. In September, 2006, the U.S. Embassy in Damascus was attacked

by terrorists armed with guns, grenades, and a car bomb. In February 2006, violent anti-western demonstrations resulted in significant damage to four embassies near the U.S. Embassy.

¶5. A number of terrorist groups have offices in Syria. Since 1979, the United States has designated Syria a State Sponsor of Terrorism due to its support for organizations such as Hizbollah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. In addition, other extremist groups are present in Syria. These groups have the potential to be either the targets of or perpetrators of acts of violence.

¶6. U.S. citizens who remain in or travel to Syria are strongly encouraged to register at the Consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Damascus or via the [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) internet based registration website, and to obtain updated information on travel and security in Syria. Those registering should give due consideration to Privacy Act provisions and waivers. Americans in Syria are reminded they should review their personal security practices, including exercising caution and taking prudent measures to maintain their security and that of family members. These measures include being aware of their surroundings, avoiding crowds and demonstrations, avoiding loitering in areas with concentrations of people such as hotels, theaters, bus stations, and schools. American citizens should keep a low profile, vary times and routes for all travel, and ensure their travel documents are current.

¶7. Syrian officials do not notify the American Embassy when American citizens are arrested. Syrian officials do not inform detained American citizens that they have the right to request consular access. In detention/arrest cases, the U.S. Embassy usually learns of a detained American via third parties, such as relatives or friends of the detained. In the event an American citizen is detained,

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he/she should continue to request consular access and the right to speak to the U.S. Embassy.

¶8. The Syrian government is acutely sensitive when it comes to the security of its borders. A passport and Syrian visa are required to enter Syrian territory. Visas must be obtained prior to arrival in Syria from a Syrian diplomatic mission located in the traveler's country of residence. The U.S. Embassy is aware that some persons have been able to obtain visas at Syrian border crossings. However, the issuance of a Syrian border visa is in no way certain, and the U.S. Embassy wishes to dissuade American travelers from attempting to enter Syria in this manner.

¶9. Syrian Immigration services closely track foreign visitors, especially students. Syrian Immigration has been known to deny re-entry to Syria even to Americans with valid dual- or multi-entry visas in their passports. Several Americans have been refused re-entry to Syria after spending weekends in Jordan or Lebanon. The Embassy cannot assist Americans in gaining re-entry to Syria or in retrieving their belongings from Syria if they are denied reentry.

¶10. U.S. consular personnel remain available to provide emergency information and services to American citizens. The U.S. Embassy in Damascus, Syria, is located at 2, Al-Mansour St., Abu Roumaneh. The Embassy telephone number is (963) (11) 3391-4444, fax (963) (11) 331-9678, e-mail: [acsdamascus@state.gov](mailto:acsdamascus@state.gov). American citizens may register with the Embassy online by visiting <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs>. Additional information may be found on the Embassy website at <http://damascus.usembassy.gov/>

¶11. Updated information on travel and security in Syria may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada or, from overseas, 1-202-501-4444. Additional details can be found in the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Syria, and the Worldwide Caution, which are available on the Department's Internet website at

<http://travel.state.gov>.

[¶12](#). Minimize considered.  
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